

Demolishing  
the Demagogues  
p.4

Geishas Gone Gangsta  
p.11

HAITI:  
Who'll Stop the Rain? p.8

# THE INDYPENDENT

Issue #58, October 6 - 20, 2004 • a free paper for free people

## HARD LABOR

An Indymedia Photo Essay  
Of People At Work

PLUS:

Courts Rule Against Democracy On The Docks,  
Dirty Laundry, Worker Centers & Resource Guide  
— All In the Centerfold

& Argentina's  
Factories Without  
Bosses, p.10

ERIN SIEGEL

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### WHAT IS INDYMEDIA?

With autonomous chapters in more than 100 cities throughout the world, the Independent Media Center is an international network of volunteer media activists.

The IMC seeks to create a new media ethic by providing progressive, in-depth and accurate coverage of issues. We are a community-based organization using media to facilitate political and cultural self-representation. We seek to analyze issues affecting individuals, communities and ecosystems by providing media tools and space to those seeking to communicate. We espouse open dialogue and placing the means of communication and creativity back in the hands of the people, away from the drive of profit.

*The Independent* is funded by benefits, subscriptions, donations, grants and ads from organizations and individuals with similar missions.

### WHAT CAN I DO TO GET INVOLVED?

The IMC has an open door. You can write for *The Independent*, film events and rallies, self-publish articles to the web, take photos or just help us run the office. As an organization relying entirely on volunteer support, we encourage all forms of participation.

The print team reserves the right to edit articles for length, content and clarity. We welcome your participation in the entire editorial process.

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## housing

# Bush Cuts Section 8, Again

By STEVEN WISHNIA

After announcing on Sept. 27 that it was backing off from a proposal that would have significantly reduced rent subsidies for New Yorkers in the Section 8 voucher program, the Bush Administration went ahead and made similar cuts anyway.

The federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) drew a storm of protest after it announced plans in August to change the formula used to calculate the "fair-market rent" (FMR) for the Housing Choice Voucher Program, which subsidizes rents for 1.9 million low-income households in privately-owned buildings. In the program, commonly known as Section 8, HUD uses local housing costs to set the fair-market rent, tenants pay 30 percent of their income for rent, and the federal government pays the landlord the difference between that and the fair-market rent for the area. The proposed change would have added three counties in northern New Jersey to the data used to set the fair-market rent for New York City,

instead of basing the figure on housing costs in the city alone. That would have cut Section 8 subsidies in the city significantly, especially for larger apartments.

On Sept. 27, HUD announced that it would not change the geographical formula for setting Section 8 rents for 2005, that it would only adjust them based on data from the 2000 census. But the actual figures released show dramatic cuts for New York's 110,000 families on the program. The fair-market rent for a two-bedroom apartment in the city has been reduced by \$55 a month, from \$1,073 last year to \$1,018. For a one-bedroom apartment, it has been cut from \$944 to \$915; for a three-bedroom home, from \$1,342 to \$1,252; and for a four-bedroom unit, from \$1,504 to \$1,288.

"This action could not have come at a worse time for New York City tenants," Joshua Goldfein of the Legal Aid Society wrote in a Sept. 1 letter to HUD. He noted that this year the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that housing costs rose 4.7 percent in the New York metropolitan area

and the city Rent Guidelines Board allowed rent increases of up to 6.5 percent.

"HUD makes no claim that rents in New York have dropped," Goldfein added. "Instead, it argues that previous years' FMRs were overstated." His letter continued, "Families with a greater number of children will bear the brunt of the reductions" and are the tenants most likely to become or remain homeless.

The changes had different effects nationally. The fair-market rent for apartments in Boston and Atlanta will go down, but tenants in Houston and Las Vegas will see more money. Some cities, including New York, may have the option of using the 2004 numbers.

The controversy over this proposal is the latest round in the Bush Administration's attempts to shrink Section 8. In August, HUD agreed to restore some funds cut from Section 8 in the fiscal 2005 budget. But the administration has proposed even deeper future reductions, by both simple cuts and formula alterations. Its 2005 budget included plans to slash the program by 40 percent by 2009.

## THE PEOPLE'S LAWYER

### "Since When Does a Dismissed Case Mean You're Guilty?"

By ANN SCHNEIDER

The First Department Appellate Division last week dismissed an attempt by protesters to prevent judges from unsealing prior Adjournment in Contemplation of Dismissals (ACDs) and using them for sentencing on a current offense. The decision is a major setback for the hundreds of Republican National Convention (RNC) arrestees who may have accepted an ACD on some prior civil disobedience.

Bruce Bentley of the National Lawyers Guild New York City Chapter said, "Criminal Procedure Law Section 160.60 clearly states that following a dismissal of charges 'the arrest and prosecution shall be deemed a nullity and the accused shall be restored, in contemplation of law, to the status he occupied before the arrest and prosecution.' For the trial judge to consider such a 'nullity' at sentencing not only defies logic, it violates the law."

In essence, by permitting a sealed ACD to be considered in sentencing on a new offense, the judge is depriving the protester of the benefit of his or her bargain. Judge John Cataldo, the same judge who recently held New York City in contempt for holding RNC arrestees more than 24 hours without charge, opened the door to this problem when he granted a prosecutor's request to unseal prior ACDs against four activists who blocked Fifth Avenue on March 26, 2003, to protest the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories and the invasion of Iraq.

The four had prior ACDs that expired by their own terms when they lived out the six months without further arrest. Their lawyer, Stephen Edwards, sought a special writ from the Appellate Division while trial was pending, in order to prevent the judge from using the expired ACDs against them while determining their sentences for the March 2003 arrests.

Unfortunately, the Appellate Division did not grasp that ordering the sentencing judge to ignore the old ACDs was the only effective way to ensure the protesters would not be doubly punished. Instead, the appeals court told the protesters they could make their arguments on appeal, after punishment had been imposed. The problem with this approach, as Edwards anticipated, is that it will be impossible for an appeals judge to know how much the prior ACDs affected the new sentence.

The protesters' lawyers now hope to take the issue to the highest state court, the Court of Appeals in Albany. Unless that court is willing to grant some emergency relief, sentencing of the four will take place on Nov. 18 at 9:30 a.m., at New York City Criminal Court, 100 Centre Street, Manhattan, Arraignment Part 4 (4th Floor).

These circumstances would cause any defendant who considers accepting an ACD to question whether the prosecution's promises will be kept.

According to Yeshiva University graduate student and defendant Kate Barnhart, "The DA's dredging up of dismissed cases as a basis to impose jail time is an unprecedented measure meant to deter political speech. Since when does a dismissed case mean that you're guilty?"



ILLUSTRATION: LIZ TILLOTSON

Public spaces are for political speech, says the No Police State Coalition  
— After two dozen arrests they're testing their contention in court

# Free Speech Exercisers

BY ERIC LAURSEN

Geoffrey Blank of the No Police State Coalition goes back to 100 Centre Street on October 19. It's not his favorite place in the city, but over the past few months, Manhattan Criminal Court is where the 30-year-old activist and teacher has done some of his best work.

No Police State began last year as a more militant response to the invasion of Iraq and the civil rights clampdown embodied by the USA Patriot Act. Blank, a Queens resident, was a founder. He helped steer the group into a series of monthly marches and, eventually, a regular Saturday afternoon speakout in Union Square that has helped return the venerable Manhattan concourse to its roots as a forum for every political point of view under the sun.

So far, so good. But along the way, Blank and his comrades have repeatedly found themselves testing the boundaries of the New York Police Department's tolerance for political speech—not just its presence, but its volume and degree of visibility. Contesting those limits has become as much a part of No Police State's mission as ending the occupation of Iraq.

Political speech isn't a special event, something that one should have to ask permission to practice, No Police State contends. "We're not protesters," says Blank. "We're First Amendment exercisers." The result has been more than 35 arrests, including 24 for Blank alone, that challenge the city's restrictions on parading and its insistence that activists obtain permits to use a bullhorn or display banners over a certain size in public spaces.

No Police State members say they never seek to get arrested. But some New York activists complain that their tactics provoke unnecessary confrontations with police and prosecutors. Others prefer to keep their distance from the eccentric scene in Union Square, which journalists regularly trawl for easy stories about ranting misfits. Blank acknowledges some tension, but says it's all one way. And even some of the same activists who criticize No Police State say they're reluctant to see anyone back down at a time when the mayor and police commissioner treat the law as a tool for keeping some kinds of political speech out of sight.

The case that will reconvene on Oct. 19 may emerge as the most significant. It stems from an arrest at a speakout last November when police say Blank was using a bullhorn without a permit. Several other times he has been arrested for the same thing, but this time he is scheduled to go to trial. If his court date doesn't result in another of 100 Centre Street's innumerable postponements, he could at last get a chance to test his contention that a permit requirement for sound amplification is unconstitutional.

Either way, he won't have a member of the bar standing up to represent him. Because over the months, No Police State have taken on another crusade. Convinced that the city's legal defense establishment—the clubhouse at 100 Centre Street—would rather plead out cases than challenge judges and prosecutors on any fundamental free speech issues, the coalition members decided to represent themselves in court. Blank has defended himself in two cases, both of which were dismissed. October 19 will be the third. In June, Joel Meyers, another member of No Police State, was acquitted in a case in which he defended himself stemming from a speakout in July of last year.

No Police State now hold weekly workshops for others who want to act as "attorneys pursuant to 105(c)"—the section of the *Civil*



TAKING UNION SQUARE several evenings a week, Geoffrey Blank and his comrades in the No Police State coalition have contested a free-speech zone on the southern steps.

*Practice Law and Rules* that defines attorneys as including any "party prosecuting or defending an action in person." Neither judges, prosecutors, nor defense attorneys look kindly on this invasion of their turf, and No Police State have had to fight for what they believe the 14th Amendment guarantees them: equal status with any other member of their class—namely, defense attorneys.

Nevertheless, Blank believes that working even through progressive groups like the National Lawyers Guild and the New York Civil Liberties Union, he and his comrades would have had no chance of bringing up the free speech issues they hope to air.

They say the laws in question are not just unconstitutional, but have been ruled as such repeatedly in court—including by the U.S. Supreme Court. Blank cites *Saia v. New York*, a 1947 case in which the high court ruled that the authorities could not restrict amplified sound at rallies because "loudspeakers are today indispensable instruments for effective public speech." Federal courts have overturned similar laws and regulations in Detroit, Baltimore, Chicago, and other places, he adds—all on the grounds that they are unconstitutional.

Blank says this case law only turned up when No Police State members did their own legal research to represent themselves. Other limitations the city imposes that he says the coalition intends to challenge are rules requiring permits to display banners larger than 2 feet by 3 feet in public spaces and to hold assemblies of more than 20 people. And as for police orders—at the recent protests against the Republican National Convention, for example—that activists can only take up half the sidewalk on marches, there's no such law on the books, Blank says. Only a rule that demonstrators not block pedestrian traffic.

That the police know they are on thin ground with their rules is suggested by the fact that most of the time, they leave No Police State alone: thirty-five-plus arrests may seem like a lot, except that the coalition been holding its speakouts—always with sound amplification—several times a week for almost a year. The deeper problem is the pattern of police enforcement, No Police State contend.

"It's a question of the law being harshly applied against groups the government doesn't like," says Blank. "If we were preaching about Jesus, the court wouldn't ever know my name.

But the minute we start talking about Iraq, or about the political murder of young blacks and Latinos, they say, 'Hey, wait a minute!'"

Blank believes No Police State is being targeted by police for their political views. In one notorious incident during a march last fall, police accused him of trying to take an officer's gun while being tackled. Prosecutors subsequently threw out the case because they couldn't prove the charge.

## MTA DISCRIMINATES AGAINST SIKHS, MUSLIMS

The Metropolitan Transit Authority has engaged in a "pattern and practice" of religious discrimination against Sikh and Muslim employees, charges a lawsuit filed Sept. 30 in the Federal District Court in Brooklyn. The lawsuit, filed by the Justice Department, cites a policy implemented in 2002—in the midst of anti-terrorist hysteria—which barred workers wearing religious head coverings from operating MTA buses. Four Muslim bus drivers were reassigned to a bus depot based on their refusal to wear regulation caps over their hijabs at work, and a Sikh train operator was moved to a train yard when he would not remove his turban. Transit officials, dismissing the suit as "totally without merit," recently offered what they considered a compromise: Muslim and Sikh employees, they said, may wear MTA-issued blue scarves bearing the MTA logo. The employees involved are undecided as to whether to accept the deal. The lawsuit asks for accommodation for all religious head coverings, and compensation for those who lost overtime pay due to their transfers.

## 4TH GRADE, ABU GHRAIB STYLE

A federal civil rights lawsuit, filed on September 27, charges a Bronx school with strip-searching school students in April. When a shop teacher's ring came up missing, blame was cast on the four boys, all fourth-graders at the time at PS 186X near Crotona Park. School family worker Julio Pizarro led the boys into the "time-out room," where they were forced to strip down to their underwear and jump up and down while Pizarro threatened them with jail time. The ring was never found.

The lawsuit was filed by the mothers of the boys. While the suit is pending, Pizarro has been suspended without pay. The teacher, whose name has been withheld, has been reassigned to administrative duties pending investigation into his involvement in the strip search. Department of Education rules prohibit strip searches of students under any circumstance.



Former inmate Dolina Duzant gives practical information to a family concerning their son and his parole.

## Former Prisoners Meet With Families to Plan Support for Those Behind Bars

BY EDGAR MATA

On October 1st, the Prison Families Community Forum held their monthly meeting at the Center for Constitutional Rights in NYC. Families arrived throughout the meeting to share their stories, their advice, and to give support.

The meeting's agenda was the "Stop the Contract" campaign, dealing with the practice of MCI charging a 68% tariff on collect calls made by inmates in

prison, considerably higher than the civilian rates. Collect calls are the only means to contact people via the telephone from prison.

In addition to petitioning directly Governor George Pataki and Glenn Goord, the Commissioner of the Dept. of Correctional Services, they are taking advantage of their grassroots structure to promote their cause on the ground. On October 21, they are having a "Launch Celebration" at the National Black Theatre for their campaign.

# IN BRIEF

commentary

## RATNER'S BROOKLYN SKYRISE COMPLEX RUNS INTO LEGAL COMPLICATIONS

Despite local reporting that developer Bruce Ratner has bought all of the necessary property and has the funding to proceed with his plan to "Manhattanize" Prospect Heights with a massive 17-sky-scraper/arena complex, residents received a boost from a recent Michigan Supreme Court ruling striking down the precedent-setting "Poletown" law that expanded the range of properties subject to "eminent domain" seizure from "public use" to "public interest." City Councilwoman Letitia James disputes Ratner's claim to have purchased 90 percent of the necessary land, saying the true figure is closer to a 25 percent.

Develop Don't Destroy, a community group opposing the plan has filed a grievance with the NYC Conflict of Interest Board citing that Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz's appointee to the NYC Planning Commission, Dolly Williams, was recently outed as one of Ratner's financial backers.

Three affected community boards have also called for local review under the Uniform Land Review Process, since half of the land for the slated development is privately owned. The State government holds that because the other half is on MTA-owned property, no review is appropriate.

## KERRY AS "METROSEXUAL?"

Fair and balanced as ever, Fox News's website falsely reported on Oct. 1 that Kerry had remarked, following last week's debate with Bush, "I'm metrosexual - he's a cowboy." The article, posted by Fox's chief political correspondent Carl Cameron, read like a spoof from *The Onion* - but was presented as legitimate news. The candidate was quoted as telling a Florida rally: "Didn't my nails and cuticles look great? What a good debate!" For those who aren't in the know, the article noted that a metrosexual "is defined as an urbane male with a strong aesthetic sense who spends a great deal of time and money on his appearance and lifestyle." Fox removed the article from its website several hours after it was posted, apologizing for what the network called Cameron's "fatigue and bad judgment, rather than malice." Fatigue and bad judgment? They report, you decide.

## AND FOX SPINS FEMINIST STUDENTS AS FELONS

Fox was equally fair and balanced when a local affiliate news team in Tucson assailed members of a feminist student group who had the nerve to register students on the University of Arizona mall. Juliana Zuccaro and Kelly Kraus were in the midst of a voter registration drive on Aug. 31 when they were approached by Fox reporters who told the women, on camera, that they were committing felonies by registering out-of-state students. "Students from out of state aren't eligible to vote in Arizona because they're considered temporary residents," Fox reporter Natalie Tejeda insisted on the nightly news. In fact, as the women informed Fox reporters, the law in Arizona is clear: Students who have resided in the state for 29 days prior to the election are eligible to vote. Thus far, Fox has failed to correct the original report.

## ELECTION WORKERS IN OHIO JUST CAN'T KEEP UP

As of last week Ohio has seen 230,000 new registrations, more than double that of 2000. The flood of voter registrations in Ohio, spurred by the efforts of independent Democratic groups, community organizations, as well as the parties, has caused the Cuyahoga Board of Elections to spend \$200,000 on temporary workers to deal with the unprecedented volume. Outreach targeted people of color and low-income areas where new registrations have quadrupled from 2000. New registrations are still coming in the mail after the Oct. 4th post-mark deadline.



NIK MOORE

# Chumps Deluxe

## DEBATE '04 AS LAME AS THE CHOICE

BY STEVEN WISHNIA

If the presidential debate of Sept. 30 were an intellectual boxing match, John Kerry won easily. George Bush was on the ropes by its second half. He froze up noticeably answering questions, hesitating and stalling until his brain revved up enough to start spitting buzzwords like "free Iraq," "democracy," and "mixed messages." He hung on to these stock phrases like they were life preservers, even when he seemed to have little idea of what they actually meant, as in one exchange where he spoke of showing Russia "the benefits of democracy... uh... that democracy will best... uh... that democracy helps the people realize their hopes and aspirations and dreams." Meanwhile, Kerry spoke with more clarity than expected, hammering Bush for waging a full-on war in Iraq after having "outsourced" the hunt for Osama bin Laden to Afghani mercenaries.

Yet neither candidate talked about bringing peace to Israel and the Palestinians, the torture of Iraqi prisoners, or the deaths of thousands of Iraqi civilians. If this debate was supposed to be about the best way to protect America from the fascist fringes of fundamentalist Islam, that was a titanic omission. Bush uses "terrorism" as a propaganda word to invoke fear of an undefined but purely evil enemy, but the struggle to defeat Islamic fascist groups who plot to kill Western civilians at random is as much a political campaign as a military effort. Absent the belief that the United States is on a crusade to dominate the Muslim world - a belief strengthened by the images from Abu Ghraib prison and the 22-foot concrete behemoth walling off large chunks of the West Bank - most Muslims would reject al-Qaeda as murderous fanatics.

Kerry's position on the war in Iraq is untenable. Bush's is a delusional disaster. Kerry

argues that the war was a mistake, but we're going to win it, and we're going to do that by attracting more allies. He might have a case if he said that we need to establish some semblance of stability in Iraq before pulling out (though you could also claim that continuing the occupation will only make things worse), but does he really believe that other countries are going to ship thousands of troops off to die in a U.S.-made quagmire? Bush's position is that even the slightest criticism of his policies is undermining the troops, and we're establishing freedom, stability and democracy in Iraq. Yes, and several winged rhesus monkeys were recently sighted flapping their way out of the presidential posteriors.

As the two candidates bickered over who was less likely to "wilt," U.S. and Iraqi government forces were attacking the city of Samarra. Military spokespeople claimed that 109 "insurgents" were killed. That definition of "insurgent" is loose enough to include many women and children, according to Associated Press reports from area hospitals.

Still, the debate was more of a direct confrontation between Bush and Kerry than one would have expected from its bizarre rules, such as the one barring the candidates from asking each other direct questions. One of the most distressing things about current American politics is that debate has been largely reduced to a contest of five-word advertising slogans - "George Bush. Tough on Terrorism." That benefits Bush's buzzword-ruled style, as it's hard for the average American to argue with the concept of "bringing freedom to Afghanistan." In this context, Bush sounds like a visionary to people who share his far-right religion or don't realize what a phony he is.

This is a president who pretends to be a hero by dressing in military-realness drag on an aircraft carrier. He brags about bringing democracy to Iraq, while he owes his presi-

dency to denying black people the right to vote in Florida. He talks about women's rights in Afghanistan, but the core of his political support comes from people who denounce feminists as godless lesbians.

The Bush regime's ruling philosophy is simple: The sole purpose of government is to make the rich richer, and every country in the world must go along. Limiting pollution or protecting workers' safety is "intrusive big government," but the voiding of the sodomy laws was a crime against nature. And anyone who disagrees with them is a traitor. They've been running the country like a bunch of junior-high bullies; the essence of much of their campaign boils down to "John Kerry's a faggot."

But what do Kerry and the Democrats stand for? So far, they've failed to articulate a clear challenge to this plutocratic near-fascist agenda. They speak incessantly about fighting for the "middle class," appearing congenitally incapable of saying "working class" or "poor," as if no one who makes less than \$40,000 a year has any political significance. Who do they think is voting for them?

Part of the reason the "flip-flop" label has stuck to Kerry is because the Democrats have failed to articulate an alternative set of values to free-market fundamentalism. When the Republicans lie that privatizing Medicare would "enable you to make choices about your health care," the Democrats don't respond by advocating a Canadian-style system in which everyone is guaranteed health care and you get to choose your own doctor. Instead, they offer minor proposals in deeply bureaucratic language.

Still, there's not much choice but to vote for Kerry. His corporate centrism is a quantum level milder than Bush's mad-cowboy fanaticism. If Bush wins the election legitimately, it will be a popular affirmation of his far-right lunacy and slime.

# National Guard Recruitment Lags

FEW SIGN UP FOR QUAGMIRE DUTY

On Sept. 23, Lt. Col. Mike Jones, the deputy division chief of recruiting and retention for the Army National Guard, announced that the guard had missed its 2004 recruiting target for the first time in a decade, falling 5,000 recruits short of its goal. Jones' announcement exposes the most serious dilemma facing the winner of November's presidential election. Due to the occupation of Iraq, the military faces two deeply interconnected crises – a recruitment and personnel shortage coupled with deteriorating morale among active-duty personnel in Iraq.

BY SHAWN REDDEN

**T**he incoming president must face the apparent catch-22 of recruiting additional forces to fight an increasingly unpopular war without fueling the erosion of morale among those serving or inciting increased public opposition to the occupation.

The government has attempted to address the inefficacy of recent recruiting efforts with a combination of incentives and coercion.

The Army has increased bonuses offered to soldiers who re-enlist after completing their initial eight-year military service obligation. The bonuses – up to \$8,000 for a six-year enlistment and up to \$4,000 for a three-year enlistment – are the largest in the Guard's history. The Army also announced it was considering shortening the length of tours of duty in Iraq.

These much heralded payouts contrast sharply with the experience of soldiers at Ft. Carson in Colorado. *The Rocky Mountain News* reported that hundreds of soldiers from the 3rd Brigade Combat Team were given a stark ultimatum: "Re-enlist for three more years or be transferred to other units expected to deploy to Iraq."

According to one soldier, the threat "outraged many soldiers who are close to fulfilling their obligation and are looking forward to civilian life."

## THE BACKDOOR DRAFT

The military issued a "stop-loss" order days after the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon. Affecting more than 160,000 military personnel, it forces those whose volunteer commitments expire to remain in the military for 90 days beyond the length of their overseas deployment and up to a year beyond their enlistment.

The other order, instituted in June 2004, activated the "Individual Ready Reserve," a group of 110,000 former soldiers who have already met their service obligation. The order means that they can be called back into service at any time.

Both have come under withering attack.

In an *Army Times* interview, Col. Kelly McKeague, executive officer in the National Guard Bureau, blamed the stop-loss order for the personnel shortage that has befallen the reserves. "The stop-loss policy, which prevents eligible soldiers from leaving the active ranks, has the trickle-down effect of keeping them from joining the Guard when they leave the regular Army."

On Aug. 17, a decorated member of the California National Guard filed the first court challenge to the "stop-loss" order. The man, who remains anonymous for privacy reasons, argues that since the invasion of Iraq has no connection to the rationale of the order, invoked to address "the continuing and immediate threat of further terrorist attacks on the United States," it should not be used to keep personnel in or send personnel to Iraq.

Many soldiers called up from the Individual Ready Reserve have simply refused to report for duty. *USA Today* reported Sept. 28 that in South Carolina, "fewer than two-thirds of the former soldiers being reactivated for duty in Iraq and elsewhere have reported on time, prompting the Army to threaten some with punishment for desertion."

The strains felt by military recruiters and service personnel reflect the current state of affairs in Iraq. On Sept. 24 Esther Schrader wrote in the *Los Angeles Times* that "the Guard is struggling to recruit people in large part because active-duty soldiers are aware that an increasing number of Guard units are being sent to Iraq and Afghanistan, so they no longer see the Guard as a safe alternative to total

retirement from the military."

Lt. Col. Jones shares this view. "The highest success in recruitment comes... from members in service just getting out and talking to people where they live. These days they're not there."

## BLEAK PROGNOSIS FOR THE OCCUPATION

The *Financial Times* published several pages of a report leaked by the Pentagon-appointed Defense Science Board. The bleak findings of the report demonstrate the strained position of the armed forces in Iraq. "The U.S. military," the report states, "will not be able to maintain its current peacekeeping commitments in Iraq and Afghanistan without a significant increase in the size of the armed forces or scaling back the objectives of the stabilization missions."

Both President Bush and Senator Kerry have pinned their hopes for averting a military mutiny on the ability of Iraqi proxies to combat the insurgency quickly. But with Iraqi troops plagued by desertion, incompetence and guerilla attacks, the idea of mobilizing a reliable Iraqi army under U.S. command seems divorced from reality. An *Agence France-Presse* report on Sept. 28 citing Pentagon documents revealed that "of the nearly 90,000 [Iraqis] currently in the police force, only 8,169 have had the full eight-week academy training." The article continued, "It will be July 2006 before the administration reaches its new goal of a 135,000-strong, fully-trained police force."

Another way that U.S. policymakers have hoped to avert a major crisis is to "internationalize" the occupation troops in Iraq. John Kerry claims that as president, he can re-establish alliances that President Bush broke in the lead-up to the March 2003 offensive. Recent statements by policymakers in France and Germany indicate that this belief, too, is illusory.

## NO REALITY IN SIGHT

With a burgeoning crisis in the military developing, with little help coming from Iraqi forces in the near future and with even less help coming from abroad, there is a vital need for the incoming president to have a realistic strategy in mind to face the occupation of Iraq.

John Kerry announced in a Sept. 24 speech at Temple University his plan to "expand our Army by 40,000 troops so that we have more soldiers to find and fight the enemy." Though Kerry has repeated this figure of 40,000 troops often, he has never explained how he plans to accomplish this without a draft.

President Bush, too, has rejected the suggestion of a draft, making clear his desire to preserve the "all-volunteer" armed forces. But unlike Kerry, Bush's surrogates have begun to intimate that the best option in Iraq may be to scale back the American presence.

In a stunning interview with the *Toronto Globe and Mail*, defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld said that "some U.S. troops could be ordered home even if they fail to quash the mounting insurgency in Iraq," adding that "U.S. troops might be part of the problem, rather than the solution."

Though it is unlikely, the possibility exists that Rumsfeld's apparent about-face is an election-year ploy to position his boss to the left of his Democratic contender on the war. But an equally likely possibility remains – that even Bush's hawkish defense secretary, after reading the latest news from the Pentagon, sees the worsening situation in Iraq as being detrimental to larger U.S. foreign policy objectives.

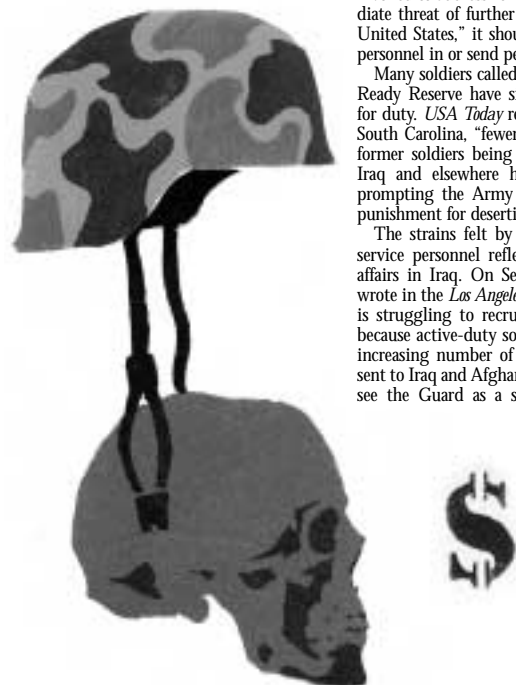


ILLUSTRATION: ANDY SMENOS





**HARD LABOR:** photos by the NYC Indymedia photo team. [imc-nyc-photo@indymedia.org](mailto:imc-nyc-photo@indymedia.org)

## WORKER CENTERS PICK UP THE SLACK

Many immigrant workers find the good old boy system of unions to be uninviting and disinterested in their concerns. These workers, together with community members, have formed worker centers. Worker centers offer information on immigration law and work related problems tailored to their communities. Below are some organizations you can contact.

### WORKER CENTERS

Chinese Staff and Workers Association: 718-633-9748, 212-619-7979  
Make the Road by Walking: 718-418-7690  
Community Voices Heard: 212-860-6001  
Filipino Workers Center: 212-741-6806  
Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence: 718-220-7391 Ext. 12

## CORPORATIONS WIN SPENDING MATCH

Unions are spending big to oust President Bush from office and to organize new members. However in the 2004 election they will be outspent by corporate America by a large margin. Notoriously anti-union Wal-Mart gives more money to Republican candidates than any other company. Richard Farmer of the Cintas corporation (uniform and laundry chain), which is fighting attempts by workers who want to organize with UNITE-HERE, is a Bush campaign "Ranger." Rangers are the largest donors followed by Pioneers and Mavericks.

- AFL-CIO will spend \$44 million to elect Kerry as President
- SEIU, the largest union in the AFL-CIO, will spend \$65 million and send 2,000 paid members to work for Kerry
- SEIU uses over half of its \$100 million spending budget for membership growth
- AFSCME-the second largest AFL-CIO member and a municipal workers union, spent \$25 million to organize 60,000 new members in 2001
- Richard Farmer from Cintas Corporation has given \$1,947,371 to Republican candidates
- Jay Allen, senior vice president of corporate affairs for Wal-Mart, raised at least \$100,000, earning him the Bush campaign's designation of "Pioneer"
- Bush has campaign receipts totalling \$338,615,189, most of which is raised by individual donors with corporate ties

[sources: NY Times, SEIU website, [www.labor-research.org](http://www.labor-research.org) and [www.georgebush.com](http://www.georgebush.com)]



# HARD LABOR

By BENNETT BAUMER

Knowing that "accidents" occur on the docks, rank-and-file longshoreman Diego Martinez took the stand Sept. 22 to testify about election fraud at Newark Local 1235 of the International Longshoremen Association (ILA). Dozens of longshoremen from Louisiana to New Jersey had filed a lawsuit in federal court seeking an injunction against the master contract that covers the entire east coast, ratified in a disputed unionwide vote on June 8. Federal Judge Victor Marrero denied the rank-and-file members' request and the contract went into effect Oct. 1.

In his decision, Judge Marrero said that union members had not established that voter coercion and the voiding of votes based on irregularities merited an injunction of the contract. The judge was also swayed by United States Maritime Association executives who testified that an injunction would be bad for the shipping business.

The master contract creates a multi-tiered wage system that gives management the power to hire new, lower-wage workers in place of longshoremen with seniority. Dock workers earn benefits based on hours worked per year,

not years on the job. Under the disputed contract, workers need to log 1000 hours to qualify for even 50 percent health coverage, 300 more than before.

Martinez, a Spanish immigrant, testified that he went to vote against the master contract, which he believes lacks many economic benefits. Union members were promised a secret vote, but when Martinez arrived, union trustee Jose Caseis was watching. Local President Al Cernadas, who has been fingered as a Genovese family mob associate, was also present.

"After he saw that I voted no, he put the paper to the side and said you don't understand, you have to vote yes," testified Martinez.

Lawyers for the opposing longshoremen said in court that workers could face retaliation for testifying. As the *Independent* reported in its last issue, high-ranking longshore union officials were indicted this past summer for mafia ties.

Rank-and-file longshoremen face an uphill battle against corrupt labor leaders and a wealthy shipping industry. The ILA and maritime industry were co-defendants in the hearing, and their lawyers argued together against union members.

Though the longshoremen lost in court, their fight to democratize the union lives another day. "I think the employers and the ILA know this wasn't a flash in the pan," said New Jersey longshoreman Tony Perlstein.

Through their efforts to gain an injunction and to vote down what many have called a "sell-out" contract, workers in the ports are coming together. Dock workers will need to organize further to defeat a triangle of power in the maritime industry – corrupt labor leaders, the mafia and stevedore bosses.

Much still separates the East coast longshoremen and their West coast counterparts, who split from the ILA in the 1930's because the East coast union opposed the era's growing worker militancy. However, East coast longshore workers have experienced recent victories. Local 1422's "Charleston 5" were arrested for protesting non-union cargo in January 2000. The labor movement rallied around the five after they were charged with rioting and conspiracy by an anti-union and racially-motivated state Attorney General. Charges were ultimately dropped for lack of evidence.

"Many ideas and progressive thinking came out of the victory of the Charleston 5. When we apply the lessons of that victory on the ILA, we're seen as troublemakers," said Local 1422 member Leonard Riley.



## THE UNION ADVANTAGE AT WORK

On average union members make more money than their non-union counterparts and enjoy superior health and retirement benefits. Organized labor affects non-union workers because employers fear workers will organize. The average non-union worker in an industry with 25% union representation appears to gain 5.0% to 7.5% higher wages because of union presence. Union workers are also protected from arbitrary firings and unfair discipline.

- Union members make 15% more in wages than non-union workers
- Union workers get about 26% more vacation time and 14% more total paid time off
- Unionized workers are more likely than their non-unionized counterparts to receive paid leave, are approximately 18% to 28% more likely to have employer-provided health insurance, and are 23% to 54% more likely to be in employer-provided pension plans.
- They also pay 18% lower health care deductibles and a smaller share of the costs for family coverage. In retirement, unionized workers are 24% more likely to be covered by health insurance paid for by their employer.
- Unionized workers receive better pension plans. Not only are they more likely to have a guaranteed benefit in retirement, their employers contribute 28% more toward pensions.
- The largest employer in the country is Wal-Mart, with 1.4 million workers. Wal-Mart workers earn an average of \$18,000 a year. Wal-Mart supplanted General Motors as the largest U.S. company three years ago. A General Motors assembler earns three times more than a Wal-Mart worker.

[sources: [www.laborresearch.org](http://www.laborresearch.org) and Economic Policy Institute]

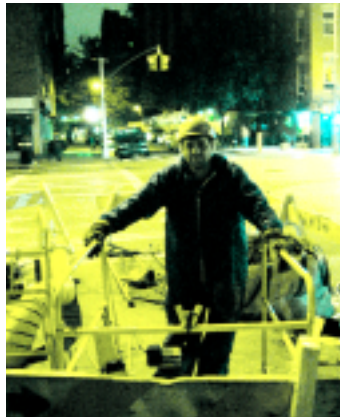
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Teamsters for a Democratic Union  
[tdu.org](http://tdu.org)

Pride at Work (LGBT workers)  
[prideatwork.org](http://prideatwork.org)

Longshoremen Rank and File  
[ilarankandfile.org](http://ilarankandfile.org)

LaborNotes.org  
Coalition of Black Trade Unionists  
[cbtu.org](http://cbtu.org)



# Airing Dirty Laundry

By TONY PECINOVSKY

Miguel Flores, a soft-spoken Mexican American from Houston, Texas, sits across the table at a local union office. He was flown into St. Louis, Missouri, to speak at a rally outside the headquarters of Angelica Corporation, the largest health care laundry services company in the United States.

Flores was fired from Angelica last spring for affiliating UNITE-HERE, North America's laundry, apparel, and hospitality workers' union, and actively participating in the organizing campaign.

"The campaign started on a Friday. The following Monday, Angelica suspended me. And by that Friday I was fired," Flores said.

### NLRB FAILS WORKERS

Flores' story highlights the almost insurmountable challenges faced by workers, especially workers of color, when forming or joining a union. "When we started organizing a union, management responded with forced meetings, intimidation, and more pressure," said Nery Jimenez, an Angelica worker from Durham, North Carolina. Workers who speak up have been harassed, fired, bullied into quitting and, in many cases, blacklisted.

The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), founded in 1935 as part of the National Labor Relations Act, is the federal body designated to protect workers rights and ensure impartiality between employer and employee.

But, according to Fred Feinstein, general counsel to the NLRB and its chief prosecutor during the Clinton administration, the NLRB "simply is not working. It is simply broken in fundamental ways."

According to Feinstein, the current system of secret ballot elections supervised by the NLRB is "framed as a contest between the union and the employer ... placed in the context of a political election," where both sides have equal access. But the current process "distorts the fact that they are not equal entities." Secret ballot elections don't work because "employers have complete control of the process and the workplace, where the company exerts economic control over the work force."

"The employer can campaign everywhere, wherever, whenever it wants. The employer can compel the employee to listen" to anti-union propaganda. And it is "perfectly legal for the employer to 'predict' all forms of dire economic consequences if a union is voted in," said Feinstein.

On the other hand, "Employees are restricted. The union can't get on the work site. The union can compel nothing."

Angelica employees are familiar with these conditions. "When the campaign started, the company was in a frenzy," said Miguel Flores. "They began holding captive audience meetings and speaking out against the union. Then they

began promising better benefits. They said 'we can resolve our problems together. We don't need a union.'"

For Angelica workers, wages and benefits are a major concern, but safe working conditions are probably the most important. "We handle extremely dirty linens," Flores said. "We handle diaper cloths, linen with blood clots and needles." Flores said he had to quickly sort through numerous 200 pound bags "straight from hospitals. Many bags still had blood, guts, body fluids, and different blood-borne diseases. We could get hepatitis or HIV."

This process is called "soil sort." "It used to take ten to twelve people to handle all the bags of linen. Now Angelica expects five to six people to do the job of twelve."

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has found Angelica guilty of numerous health and safety violations. On August 31, OSHA issued citations to Angelica's Batavia, New York plant for dozens of job safety and health standard violations and proposed penalties exceeding \$140,000 against the company.

Nationally, UNITE-HERE has filed over 70 unfair labor practice charges with the NLRB, charging Angelica with threatening plant closures, withholding information, spying on workers, and suspending or terminating pro-union workers. While unfair labor practice charges have had some impact, the NLRB doesn't actively campaign for workers' rights. And since the Bush Administration's appointment of three members to the NLRB's five-member board, the situation has worsened.

But workers are beginning to construct an alternative vision of labor and community power that challenges the NLRB to live up to its man-

date of protecting workers' rights. The current UNITE-HERE campaign to organize Angelica Corporation provides an example of how workers' grievances can be articulated and acted upon in a way that enhances the role of direct moral and political community persuasion, making corporate accountability a local issue of democracy and workers' rights, rather than a bureaucratic issue based on dependence of antiquated laws.

### WORKER RIGHTS BOARDS AS AN ALTERNATIVE

On May 27, 1993, in an attempt to draw national attention to the NLRB's failure, Jobs with Justice (JwJ), a network of grassroots workers' rights organizations, coordinated a National Day of Action against the NLRB. Sit-ins and protests shut down NLRB offices in 26 cities across the country. More than 10,000 people participated.

After the protests, JwJ and unions involved in the NLRB actions decided to establish an alternative structure to advocate for workers' rights, especially the right to organize. Determined that workers needed a formal body able to not only hear workers complaints, but to promptly and strategically act on those complaints as well, they formed the Workers Rights Boards (WRB).

WRBs can't take cases directly to the NLRB. But by utilizing moral and political persuasion and threatening widespread public exposure against recalcitrant employers, which the NLRB isn't designed to do, WRBs create labor- and community-powered employer accountability, rather than bureaucratic dependence on antiquated laws. WRB members are able to use personal authority and community status to mobilize support for and intervene on behalf of workers.





### CROWDS LOOT ONTARIO SUPERMARKET TO PROTEST LOUSY WELFARE FUNDING

Taking a five-fingered discount, shoppers walked away with \$3,500 worth of food and toiletries in a direct action against Weston supermarkets. The action against the massive supermarket chain is in response to the failure of the local government to provide adequate funding for social assistance for poor-working class residents. Galen Weston, owner of a chain of supermarkets that control 50% of the food distribution market in Ontario is also the second richest person in Canada.

The haul of goods included chickens, roast beef, racks of ribs, diapers, and other goods people in Ontario could not afford. "I've never shopped like this before in my life" said one participant. "Instead of searching for the cheapest items, I could go for more expensive quality stuff." The food was distributed in Ontario's downtown section.

Organizers with the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty plan to give the bill to the Liberal Government, "both for the food we took, and for that which is owed to people trying to survive on welfare and disability incomes" according to *ocap.net*.

### EUROPEAN SOCIAL FORUM SET TO CONVENE IN LONDON

An estimated 20,000 to 30,000 people are expected to come to London this month to attend the third European Social Forum (ESF) taking place Oct. 14-17. However, weeks before the ESF begins, there is an embarrassing accommodation crisis due to London's high cost of living relative to the rest of Europe, and concerns over the role of the Socialist Workers Party, Socialist Action and the political and financial control of Mayor Ken Livingstone's Greater London Authority (GLA). Some would-be participants claim a lack of transparency in planning and designing the forum by the socialist groups. Others are uneasy with Mayor Livingstone's funding of the forum. In response, hundreds of autonomous workshops and initiatives will run during the ESF.

### SCORES KILLED IN LATEST ISRAELI INCURSIONS INTO GAZA

A 13-year-old Palestinian girl was shot dead Oct. 5 by IDF soldiers raising the death toll to 77 Palestinians from the beginning of operation "Days of Penitence."

The girl, Iman Alhamas, was on her way to school along with two friends, when she came close to an IDF post. According to eye witnesses, a soldier shot a warning shot in the air, which made the girl drop her school bag and start running away. At that point several soldiers from different posts opened fire at her. Palestinian doctors reported 20 bullet holes found on her body. IDF responded that the killing "was an unfortunate accident," occurring due to suspicion that her backpack is a bomb.

### ARGENTINIAN WORKERS DEFEND ZANON CERAMICS PLANT

On Sept. 14 a delegation representing Argentina's roughly 200 worker-occupied factories marched in Buenos Aires. They demanded that the government definitively legalize the expropriation of factories and other bankrupt enterprises which were abandoned by owners and run under direct workers' control after the collapse of the country's economy in December 2001.

A delegation of 170 activists – 100 workers from Zanon ceramics factory and 70 from social movements supporting the factory – arrived in the morning in Buenos Aires to march to a local court and national congress in defense of a possible government eviction of Zanon, a massive occupied ceramics plant.

After Argentina's financial and political meltdown of 2001, the government gave many workers occupying businesses temporary permits to function inside offices and factories. However, these agreements had a two year limit. Some of the permits are set to expire before the end of 2004. It is uncertain how the current government will negotiate the conflict.

# Victims of the Storms

## A POLITICAL HURRICANE HITS HAITI

A political storm hit northern Haiti long before Tropical Storm Jeanne came along. On March 20, Interim Prime Minister Gerard Latortue flew into Gonaïves, where a crowd of thousands welcomed him. Latortue embraced gang elements and the former military that helped overthrow the democratic government of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide as "freedom fighters."

BY KEVIN PINA

Since March, Latortue and his government have done little to take control of Haiti's third-largest city and have allowed gang leaders like Buteur Metayer and Wilfort Ferdinand to run it like a private fiefdom. This had disastrous consequences when Tropical Storm Jeanne arrived to stake her claim in Haiti's misery.

The political storm took many victims as well, leaving Haiti ill-prepared for the devastation brought by Jeanne. One of its first victims was the Civil Protection Office, following a rampage led by the "freedom fighters" against suspected Aristide supporters. This politically benign institution had been established in cooperation with the local municipal government with grants provided by United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and administered through the Pan-American Development Foundation (PADF).

Unfortunately, with Washington, Paris and Ottawa ushering in a man-made disaster with the destruction of constitutional authority in Haiti, all of the tax dollars USAID invested in

preparing for natural disasters like Tropical Storm Jeanne were wasted as well.

Tropical Storm Jeanne was exactly the type of disaster USAID and PADF's programs were set up to manage. Components of the Civil Protection Office monitored incoming tropical storms and provided an advanced warning and preparedness network designed to plan a response before disaster struck. Plans included advising communities of approaching storms and preparing for them by storing large supplies of drinking water, food, medical supplies and portable tents for those displaced from their homes.

When Jeanne hit Haiti, these structures no longer existed. All of the trained and competent participants in the program had long been driven out of the area, their offices pillaged and burned. Nowhere was this more evident than in Gonaïves.

Instead of reasserting control of the state and rebuilding the necessary infrastructure



LIZ TILLOTSON

that was destroyed following the coup of Feb. 29, Latortue followed a policy of neglect and accommodation of thugs.

In the end, Latortue is a victim of his own failed policies, and ultimately, the failed policy of the Bush Administration in Haiti.

Of course, the ones who will suffer the most as a result of these failures are the very people Bush's Haitian henchmen claim to have come to this island nation to help. The disregard for institutions destroyed during the latest coup and the lack of planning and response for natural disasters are only symptoms of a political storm that is far from over in Haiti.

*Kevin Pina, an independent journalist and filmmaker, is currently residing in Haiti and is associate editor of BlackCommentator.com*

# SUDAN: Oil, Water, and Guns

BY KAZEMBE BALAGOOON

After 37 years of civil war in Sudan, the United States government is finally taking notice. Secretary of State Colin Powell, backed by United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, has demanded that the Sudanese government disarm the *Janjaweed* Arab militia groups charged with raping and killing thousands of African herders and farmers.

While there are no U.N. peacekeeping troops in the Sudan, 200 French soldiers have taken up positions in nearby Chad to deal with the refugee crisis.

The current war in Sudan is rooted in oil, water and empire. Its major players are holdovers of the Cold War now locked in a global struggle over natural resources and spheres of influences in the Middle East.

### ETHNIC RIVALS IN SUDAN

Sudan is the largest country in Africa, bordering Chad, Egypt, Congo, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Libya, the Central African Republic, Kenya and Uganda.

Since independence in 1956, Arabized

Africans and Muslims from the north and the capital Khartoum have dominated Sudanese politics. Autonomy was granted to the nomadic farming Nuer and Dinka peoples in the south, who largely practice Christianity and animist beliefs. As the central government imposed Islamic law and ended autonomy for the south, indigenous Africans armed themselves primarily in the form of the Sudanese People Liberation Army (SPLA), now the Sudanese Liberation Army (SLA).

The SPLA received funding from the Marxist regime in Ethiopia and the Soviet Union. At the time, the Sudanese government received major funding from the United States to battle Soviet influence.

To disrupt the SPLA, the Sudanese government in the north armed Arabic nomads, who became known as "Janjaweed," Arabic for "armed man on a horse." It is estimated that between 30,000 and 50,000 Sudanese have died in the conflict.

### BIG OIL

In 1974, Chevron began exploring for oil in the southern part of Sudan. The SLA, seek-

ing to disrupt the economy of the central government, attacked oil fields and workers, forcing Chevron to pull out. In response, the Sudanese government has led a further drive to displace indigenous populations from the oil-rich South.

U.S. oil interests have been barred from doing business with Sudan since President Bill Clinton declared the country a terrorist ally and bombed Khartoum in 1998. The issue of displacement and enslavement of Africans in Sudan has been a major issue for American Christian groups, which have called for ongoing sanctions against Sudan.

The Bush Administration is following a policy of engagement with Sudan, while hedging its bets by supporting southern groups under the umbrella of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). Recently, the U.S. has provided the NDA with \$3 million while backing a peace plan between the SLA and the government in Khartoum.

On the international front, pressure on multinational petroleum companies has been effective. Talisman, a Canadian oil corporation, was forced to abandon its interests in Sudan after various protests.

# GENERAL ASSEMBLY ROUNDUP

# U.N. Shuts Out the World

UNITED NATIONS, N.Y. — Heavy security during the first days of the 2004 session of the United Nations General Assembly – hundreds of police officers, Secret Service agents, street and traffic barriers, U.S. Coast Guard and city police boats on the East River behind U.N. headquarters – seemed to be symbolic of the nations' determination to do little to stop the violence in the Middle East, Africa, and West Asia.

BY DONALD PANETH

Perhaps that was why the attending heads of state, the prime ministers and the foreign ministers feared a terrorist incident.

Or, perhaps the U.S. as the host nation was protecting the U.N. from any outside influences, hints of dissatisfaction.

The U.N. was barricaded against the world and the people inhabiting it.

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan and U.S. President George W. Bush addressed the opening meeting of the session on Sept. 21. Annan spoke about the "rule of law." It was at risk around the world, he said.

"Again and again, we see the most fundamental laws shamelessly disregarded," Annan said. "And all over the world we see people being prepared for further such acts."

Bush, on the other hand, said nothing. He didn't criticize the U.N., as he had in recent years. He didn't demand that the U.N. do anything. He was spreading freedom and democracy, fighting "radicalism and terror."

Yet, the mass media publicized his remarks as "defiant." He was a gallant leader in the struggle for progress, human dignity, hope and high ideals.

Neither Annan nor Bush mentioned that the world was careening towards barbarism, though Annan came close to it in an oblique sort of way.

On the war fronts, as the Assembly convened, there was much activity.

But the Security Council had not taken up Iraq in weeks. It met on Oct. 1 to consider "close protection troops for U.N. staff in Iraq," the structure of the force to be recruited by the U.N., the U.S. and U.K. A legal framework was needed for the arrangement.

Carol Bellamy, executive director of the

U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF), declared on Sept. 30 that the killing of dozens of children in Baghdad was an "unconscionable slaughter of innocents."

The U.N. staff and role in Iraq remained minuscule, essentially undefined.

An international conference on Iraq to lend legitimacy to the Iraqi elections scheduled for January 2005 may be held in the latter part of November, not in October as Secretary of State Colin Powell had earlier proposed, U.N. sources said. The possibility of U.N. participation was being discussed.

Returning from Darfur, Sudan, U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour told reporters that there should be an international police presence in Darfur to monitor and assist Sudanese police around the camps for displaced persons. Juan Mendez, U.N. Special Adviser for the Prevention of Genocide, said "we have not turned a corner" in preventing genocide in Darfur.

"One of the most serious challenges is the climate of impunity in Darfur today," Mendez continued. "This impunity contributes to a general state of lawlessness throughout the region."

Annan voiced "grave concern" Sept. 30 about the escalation of violence and the rising casualty toll on both sides in the Gaza Strip. He urged the belligerents to cease all violence immediately.

In Afghanistan, 300 donkeys are being used to deliver voting materials to the provinces of Badakhshan and Nursistan in the northeast, Farah in the southwest, and Panjshir, not far from Kabul. An election for president is to be held on Oct. 9 in the new Afghanistan free of the Taliban, occupied by the United States, where the people are as poor and the methods as traditional as ever.

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# REVIEWS

## CULTURE, POLITICS AND CRITICISM

### Occupy, Resist, Produce

Naomi Klein Takes On Argentina's Occupied Factories

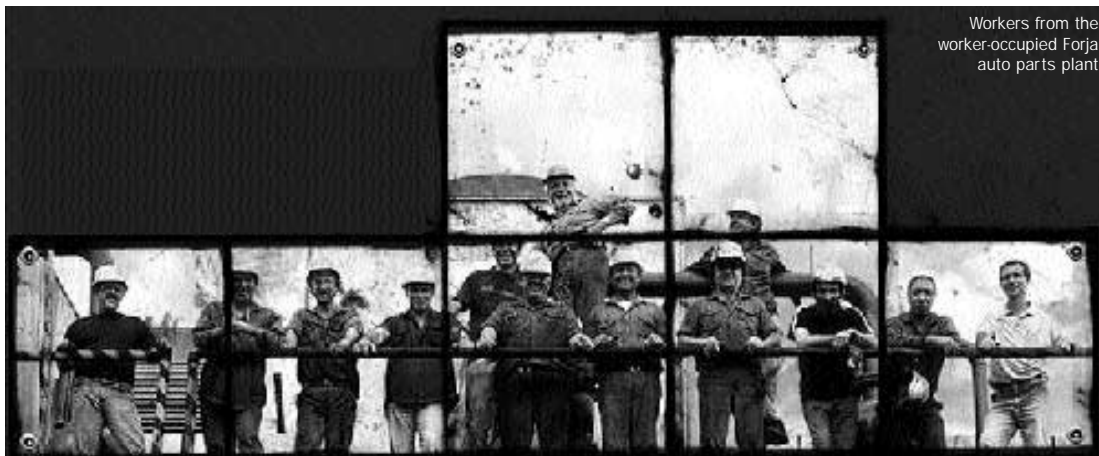
#### THE TAKE

WRITTEN BY NAOMI KLEIN  
DIRECTED BY AVI LEWIS  
ODION FILMS, 2004 • 87 MINUTES

What is possible is just about always more than anyone expects; it can even be more than some dare hope. When Argentina's once-wealthy economy imploded after years of free-market pillaging, foreign investors and the national elite pulled \$40 billion out of the country in the middle of the night while the government froze individual savings accounts. Millions of people were financially ruined in the country with Latin America's largest middle class. Capitalism was breaking its own rules. Free trade turned out to mean whatever financial markets dictated. For Argentina, they decreed an end to general prosperity after decades of growth.

An earthquake of popular revulsion drove out six governments in two weeks, but was unable to dislodge the state. Despite a national legacy of murderous military rule in the face of popular movements, crowds overflowed the streets smashing the banks now empty of cash with hammers, all the while singing *que se vayan todos*—they all must go.

It wasn't one party or politician the people rejected, but an entire political culture called simply, *el modelo*. The ruling elites made corruption a virtue by carrying out the Washington Consensus of neo-liberal austerity and capitalist brigandage. But it was the aftershocks of the uprising that got really interesting.



Workers from the worker-occupied Forja auto parts plant

Starting at the Brukman shirt factory in Buenos Aires, an escalating series of factory occupations was launched by workers under the slogan "occupy, resist, produce." Over 200 occupations brought idle factories back to life despite police violence and police obstruction. Unable to withstand the uprising and with the economy in total shambles, the Argentine government relented, allowing for the temporary seizure of abandoned factories by unemployed workers.

For much of *The Take*, we follow the travails of a proud machinist and nearly-broken family man from one factory as he and his comrades seize the plant and navigate a complex election that threatens to bring back Carlos Menem, the ascot-wrapped caudillo who blithely drove Argentina to bankruptcy. *The Take* ends upbeat with the occupied factory lighting up as a new workers' cooperative with government permission to produce. But now,

after the movie is over, the situation is heating up. The initial allowance of occupations had a two-year window and those two years are over. The situation is currently unstable and it appears that the government will move on the cooperatives when they can get away with it. *The Take* is a remarkable introduction to a struggle that is just beginning and is very much ongoing.

Filmmakers Naomi Klein and Avi Lewis focused on these collective seizures and the lives of the workers transformed by the struggle as a way of showing an alternative to the horror of runaway industries under the globalization of capital. A writer with the *Toronto Globe & Mail*, and *The Nation*, Klein is perhaps the most prominent young writer to speak in sympathy with the street rebels of the anti-capitalist movement. Klein makes sure to include her own voiced-over rejection of workers' government displacing the rule of capital completely as an "old"

model, equated with the authoritarian legacy of Peronism, an opinion no doubt shared by many Argentines in the years since military rule murdered thousands of leftists.

Klein and Lewis use the occupied factories as an example of a "network" approach, which they argue gives more room for the agency of workers themselves than more radical solutions. Pervasive throughout the western left, this political myopia plays out in *The Take's* selective reporting on the Argentine elections.

Respected by the community, the occupations shined against the shadow of reaction as Menem launched a galling comeback in the first national election since "they all must go." Unfortunately, lesser-evilism is hardly confined to the North American two party system.

The social movements profiled by Klein were unable to mount a national political challenge inside the voting booth or out. In fear of Menem's promised crackdown, many reluctantly fell behind Nestor Kirchner, a house-broken Social Democrat with a populist wrap to the same old shit. Mass hatred and the prospect of certain defeat forced Menem to withdraw from the runoff vote after he'd taken the highest vote in the general election. Kirchner became the de facto victor and after assuming the presidency promptly signed fresh loan agreements with the very international financiers from the IMF that wrecked Argentina to begin with.

Political power may be an "old" goal for the workers, but apparently the capitalists never get tired of it. Instead of *que se vayan todos*, Argentina got *que sera, sera*.

Where ten years ago the utopian left was carried away by Zapatista poetics, they've moved on to Argentina where limited goals can still seem visionary and romantic. *The Take's* implicit argument for surviving capitalism instead of overthrowing it should give those most inspired by the events in Argentina pause. A revolutionary situation lapsed because the people, and the social movements which gave voice to their highest aspirations, were unable and unwilling to

seize the moment. Capital still rules Argentina, even after it fled.

*The Take* succeeds in letting the world know of a great victory for workers used to losing while it ends up arguing a more dubious point. In effect, Klein remixes the famous quip of capitalist triumphalism, "there is no alternative," to say in a roundabout way, there is "only" alternative. The very idea that the victims of corporate globalization can do more than carve out a space of temporary autonomy in the backwash of capitalism is beyond discussion. Apparently socialism is still a dirty word, no matter how weak capitalism gets. *Tenemos un mundo que ganar*. Here's to taking it all.

—JED BRANDT

### Remembering the Straphanger's Revolt

#### THE RIDERS AND THE REBIRTH OF CITY TRANSIT

UNTIL OCTOBER 30  
THE MUNICIPAL ART SOCIETY  
457 MADISON AVENUE (AT 51ST ST.)  
MON. – SAT., EXCEPT THURS.  
11 A.M. TO 5 P.M.  
ADMISSION IS FREE.

Few New Yorkers wax nostalgic about the days when riding a subway meant risking your life. In the late 1970s, train delays were common, caused by frequent derailments and platform fires. Transit workers cowered behind token booth windows scarred with bullet holes, while riders put up with aging trains, broken turnstiles, rampant crime, and endless stretches of graffiti.

The Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) responded by proposing fare hikes. But by 1981, the idea of paying more money to use a dysfunctional system led subway ridership levels to plunge lower than at any time in the previous 60 years.

Enter the Straphangers. Organizing workers, civic groups, and public officials, the New York Public Interest Research Group's Straphangers Campaign intervened with a mission

### In America 2014, It Happens Here

#### AMERICA 2014: AN ORWELLIAN TALE

BY DAWN BLAIR  
PROGRESSIVESOURCE.COM

In 2014, halfway through George Blush's fourth term as president of God's United States, the world is in terrible straits. Term limits have been eliminated and civil liberties suspended indefinitely. In Time of War, all media are owned by the government-controlled Foxy News and all dissent is a crime. Abroad, the United States fights wars in Pakistan, Indonesia and Colombia, while Europe is flooded by millions of war refugees and has suspended diplomatic relations with Blush's regime.

Political prisoners are sentenced to "ultimate rehabilitation" in Homeland Security private prisons where their lives are offered up to sadistic gangs. Dissidents seek refuge in Canada, but are tracked by Homeland Security bounty hunters

who use sophisticated DNA testing and voice recognition technologies.

Such is the harrowing vision of the future delineated by Dawn Blair, a pseudonym for New York-based journalist Jonathan Greenberg, in *America 2014: An Orwellian Tale*.

The novel follows the journey of Winston Smith, named after the protagonist of Orwell's *1984* by hippie parents. Smith, a young government propagandist who experiences a political awakening following a run-in with his boss, is jailed for "subversive behavior in the first degree." He is subsequently freed by the Resistance, a group of hackers and direct action activists hiding out in Bed-Stuy, who hope to use Smith's propaganda skills against George Blush and Dick Croney's repressive government.

Stylistically, *America 2014* is a far cry from Orwell's *1984*. At times didactic, the novel's reach is constrained by one-dimensional characters and unconvincing dialogue. Yet the plot is surprisingly engaging, offering a gratifying element of suspense, and the premise is deeply thought provoking. I found myself wanting to discuss this book with

everyone I knew, to debate which of Blair's disturbing predictions for the future were credible, which were far-fetched enough to make the satire brittle. *America 2014* walks a thin line between visionary and paranoid, which may ultimately be a strength in the debates it has the power to provoke.

While I doubt the likelihood in ten years of Predator Drones sweeping down from the sky and instantly destroying suspected "subversives," it is undeniable that the foreign policy Blair imagines is straight out of the neocon's Plan for a New American Century. Foxy News' propaganda-centered stranglehold on the media strikes uncomfortably close to home in this time of media consolidation and "embedded reporters."

If not great literature, *America 2014* is nevertheless highly readable and provocative, a call to action in the face of an administration whose assault on civil liberties, international law, and truth would make Orwell write another book. You will want to join the Resistance, before it's too late.

—NEELA GHOSHAI

to improve the transit system. Now, the Urban Center Gallery of the Municipal Art Society is showing *The Riders and the Rebirth of City Transit*, an exhibit that celebrates this achievement with a retrospective on how riders and their advocates helped revive the subways.

Panels feature highlights of the campaign's successes, including how riders saved Brooklyn's Franklin Avenue Shuttle from abandonment, the defeat of an MTA-sponsored measure to rid subway stations of performers, and the reversal of the \$1.4 billion Westway Highway project – much of whose funding went toward fixing the subway system instead. As a result of the Straphangers Campaign efforts during the past 25 years, mass transit use is now on a par with its highest levels ever.

Designed by Pratt Professor Jon Otis, the exhibit groups subway ads, leaflets and photos inside a space that more resembles a corporate job fair presentation than a gallery installation. A careful look at the panels, however, reveals a well-documented struggle to improve transit services and resist fare hikes at all costs. Seventies-era groove jams play along with a video taking viewers back in time to explain the history of the Straphangers Campaign. Activists, including staff attorney and guiding spirit Gene Russianoff, are caught on film as they pass out flyers at subway stations and petition MTA board meetings, holding signs with anti-MTA slogans.

There is a bit of showing off here. The exhibit gives viewers the feeling that the Straphangers are patting themselves on the back for a job well done. But one glance at the stark contrast between before and after photos of the B train demonstrates that they have reason to boast.

While conditions in subway cars and stations are better than the late 1970s, commuters must still contend with frequent flooding, threats to monthly pass discounts, and a speaker system rivaling the one used in Peanuts cartoons. Still, the exhibit leaves the impression that as long as these ills persist so too will the Straphangers.

*The Riders and the Rebirth of City Transit* will coincide with the centennial anniversary of the New York City subway system, which opened on Oct. 27, 1904.

— F. TIMOTHY MARTIN

## Geishas Gone Gangsta Worshipping at the altar of style.

### A3 THE REVOLUTION: TELEVISED, TERRORIZED, SEXUALIZED

CAREN GOLDEN FINE ARTS  
539 WEST 23RD STREET, THROUGH OCTOBER 23. ADMISSION IS FREE.

Japanese teenagers worship at the altar of style. Forget Gaultier and Versace. Tokyo's über-fashionable don everything from 18th-century chambermaid's dresses and death-pale skin to tiny plaid schoolgirl skirts with oversized slouchy socks and pigtails all in a relentless pursuit of "kawaii," or cuteness.

In the late 1990's, Maryland-based artist Iona Rozeal Brown stumbled upon another trend among Japanese and Korean youth: the "ganguro." Literally meaning "black-face," the ganguro would go to extreme lengths to imitate hip-hop icons like Lil' Kim – tanning, perming, crimping, braid-

ing, buying and bling-blinging their way to quintessential ghettotfabulousness.

Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, or so the saying goes. But Brown wasn't flattered. Instead, the painter and DJ of African-American and Cherokee descent found herself offended by the rabidly consumerist appropriation of hip-hop culture – a culture borne of historical struggle and strife.

Fascinated by the ganguro fetishism, however, Brown took the opportunity to try a little cultural sampling of her own.

In a running series of paintings that she calls Afro-Asiatic allegories (a3), Brown takes on the similar excesses of today's hip-hop and 18th-century Edo Japan, commenting harshly on the commodification of culture.

Her latest 12-piece installation, *a3 the revolution: televised, terrorized, sexualized*, is on view at Chelsea's tiny Caren Golden Fine Arts through late October.

In the vein of traditional Japanese Ukiyo-e woodblock prints, Brown paints larger-than-life images of geishas gone gangsta and kabuki turned KRS-1. Viewed from the street, her vibrant palette of yellows, teals and furry pink collars pops against the stark whiteness of the gallery walls. And while it may be the hues and texture that draw you into the world of these dark figures, the colorful kimonos that hang seductively from their wearers bare enough breasts to entice even the most disinterested passerby.

Like the ganguro, Brown's geishas appear in blackface, their deeply bronzed color extending only as far as the hairline to reveal the skin's lighter shade underneath. With splits in hand, sporting golden afros complete with black-power-fisted blow-out combs or tightly woven braids, her figures pose to show off their hip-hop finery: name-brand gear, expensive diamond jewelry, and gold-capped teeth.

Brown's over-the-top images come down harshly but sarcastically on the wholesale consumption of style.

Armed with only a mouthful of rotting teeth, her "woims" (read: worms, an acronym for weapons of mass spending) devour everything from Fubu T-shirts to a Burberry scarf. Lacking eyes, these amorphous green creatures are blind consumers of style without substance.

The woims crawl through the progression of her paintings and seem to coax forth the increasingly ostentatious displays of consumerism. In the beginning, a lonely few look on adoringly as one geisha curls her hair. But by the end, dozens of woims teem around another courtesan, peeking through her afro and inching up her hand as she gazes at her gold-capped teeth in a lacquered Japanese hand-mirror.

Though art isn't required to be objective, Brown's criticism is at times one-sided. While hip-hop has taken some of its own cues from Asian style, Brown said in a recent interview that, like kabuki, the ganguro's imitation is like "dressing in drag."

Fortunately, Brown doesn't heap hip-hop's exploitation solely on the shoulders of fashion-forward Japanese teens.

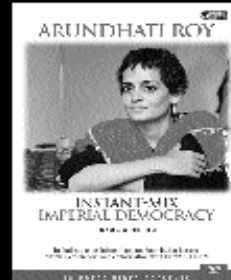
In the final piece of her show, *a3 bling propaganda #3*, Brown places revered mainstream hip-hop icons in a Mao-era propaganda pose. With a slight smile, the illustrious leader, depicted as Russell Simmons, proudly holds forth a gleaming diamond necklace like a talisman. A crowd of famous faces line up behind Simmons, transfixed by the object in a mixture of fear, desire and awe.

For the ganguro and their icons both, the caption just below the logo of Simmons' tracksuit captures the essence of Brown's message: "Bling is the white sun in our hearts."

—CATRIONA STUART



a3 blackface #59, Iona Rozeal Brown, 2003



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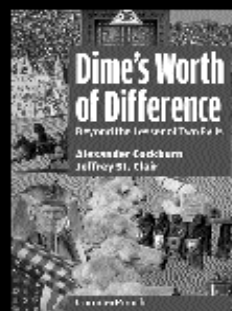
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ANTRIM CASKEY

#### SAT. 10/16

11am – 5pm • Free  
**BROOKLYN PEACE FAIR 2004**  
 Learn about peace and justice issues at home and abroad in a fun, dynamic environment. Workshops, discussion groups, films, arts activities, story telling, performances, and much more. Please bring non-perishable goods for hurricane Ivan victims, books for prisoners and gifts for soldiers fighting in Iraq.  
 YWCA, 30 Third Ave. at Atlantic Ave., Brooklyn  
[www.brooklynpeace.org](http://www.brooklynpeace.org)

#### SUN. 10/17

All day  
**MILLION WORKER MARCH ON DC**  
 Join march in support of labor rights and against the war in Iraq. Busses leave from locations all over the city. \$35 tickets at the International Action Center.  
 39 W. 14th St. #206  
[www.iacenter.org](http://www.iacenter.org)

6:30pm doors • \$10 adv/\$12 doors  
**KOZMIC SISTAZ: FREE SUDAN/ STOP THE GENOCIDE CONCERT**  
 Featuring Karen Gibson-Roc & FLUID, Malene Younglao, Yewande and MARTIRI: Southpaw  
 125 5th Ave., Park Slope  
[www.spsounds.com](http://www.spsounds.com)

#### THU. 10/21

6–9pm  
**COME PARTY WITH THE NEW YORK CAMPAIGN FOR TELEPHONE JUSTICE**  
 Speakers, poetry, music by DJ Revolution and refreshments. Stop the contract! The Prison Telephone Justice Project addresses the hardships to prisoners and their families caused by the excessive fees – sometime as much as 60% above market rates imposed by telephone companies on calls made by inmates.  
 National Black Theatre  
 2033 5th Ave., 3rd floor (@125th St.)

#### FRI. 10/22

7pm • \$10  
**SEVEN STORIES PRESS INVITES YOU TO JOIN AN EVENING OF READINGS**  
 Join Howard Zinn, Lili Taylor, Sarah Jones, John Sayles, Wallace Shawn, Brian Jones and others to celebrate the publication of *Voices of a People's History of the United States*, by Howard Zinn and Anthony Arnove;  
 New York Society for Ethical Culture  
 Concert Hall, 2 West 64th Street at Central Park West  
[www.sevenstories.com](http://www.sevenstories.com)

# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

#### THE INDYPENDENT

has open meetings every Tuesday, 7pm at 34 E. 29th St., 2nd floor.

# OCTOBER

#### FRI. 10/8

9am – 9pm • Free  
**THE VOTING BOOTH PROJECT**  
 Designers and artists re-imagine actual Florida voting booths from the 2000 Presidential election, commenting on design, democracy, and related themes. Participating designers and artists include David Byrne, Christo, Frank Gehry, Milton Glaser, Hugh Hardy, Maira Kalman, Diane von Furstenberg and more; through 11/5;  
 2 West 13 Street Gallery  
[www.parsons.edu/events](http://www.parsons.edu/events)

6:30 – 11pm

Free until 8pm • \$10 after  
**ENTER THE FOX FREE ZONE!**  
 Join The Nation Institute and Janeane Garafalo and Sam Sedar of Air America's *The Majority Report* for a giant-screen, live broadcast of the presidential debate. Free food!  
 Crobar, 530 West 28th Street

#### SAT. 10/9

7-10pm • Free  
**RESISTANCE CINEMA PRESENTS "HIGHJACKING CATASTROPHE: 9/11, FEAR & THE SELLING OF AMERICAN EMPIRE" (64MIN).**  
 This new documentary exposes how the Bush Administration has used the trauma of 9/11 and the war on terrorism to advance a radical and long-standing neo-conservative plan for global geopolitical domination. Q&A session with ROBERT JENSEN, professor of media law, ethics, and political science at the University of Texas at Austin;  
 Community Church of NYC  
 40 East 35th St. at Park Ave.  
[russellbranca@yahoo.com](mailto:russellbranca@yahoo.com)

8pm – 12am

#### WHAT THE BOOK?

Flux Factory has collected artists' books and other less formal interpretations to be displayed in an installation that aims to challenge mass production and the mundanity of the everyday coffee table book.

The exhibition space will be transformed from a traditional gallery into an interactive domestic lounge; through 10/28;  
 Flux Factory  
 3838 43rd Street, Long Island City  
[www.fluxfactory.org](http://www.fluxfactory.org)

#### TUE. 10/11

7:30pm • Suggested \$6/\$10/\$15  
**COLUMBUS DAY DIALOGUE: BUSH AND RECOLONIZATION**  
 Shaken and polarized by violence abroad and at home, Americans nervously eye November's election. Tariq Ali's *Bush in Babylon* and Laura Flanders' *Bushwomen* address dire issues at stake in the upcoming contest. At what cost does the recolonization of Iraq come? Who are the women in Bush's cabinet helping to

make it all happen? Join this conversation on the day that celebrates the original imperialist, Christopher Columbus, with noted writers and activists Tariq Ali and Laura Flanders.  
 The New School Actors Studio Drama School, 151 Bank Street, 3rd Fl.  
<http://www.brechtforum.org>

#### WED. 10/13

7pm • Free  
**COLUMBIA ANTI-SWEATSHOP GROUPS KICK OFF THEIR FALL CAMPAIGN**  
 Former Kukdong sweatshop union leader Aide Camacho Duarte speaks about organizing a union in the face of government and brand opposition.  
 Call 323-620-1136 for more info.

#### TUES 10/19

10pm  
**HUNGRY MARCH BAND AND FRIENDS**  
 Hungry March Band (HMB) is NYC's baddest and brassiest musical project: HMB builds upon the practices of New Orleans second lines, gypsy brass bands, and other global brass and percussion ensembles whose roots lie in local rituals and customs. Colorful, dynamic explosions of song and dance encourage interaction between the musicians, color guard, and audience.  
 Galapagos Art Space  
 70 N. 6th Street, Brooklyn  
[www.galapagosartspace.com](http://www.galapagosartspace.com)

#### SUN. 10/24

1pm – 6pm • \$10  
**RADICAL WALKING TOUR OF HARLEM**  
 Bruce Kayton will lead a 5-hour tour of radical Harlem that includes Marcus Garvey's rowhouse, Malcolm X, A. Philip Randolph and the founding of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, Black Panther headquarters, Langston Hughes' house and more.  
 Meet in front of Starbucks (former Communist Party headquarters) at 306 Malcolm X Blvd at Lenox Ave.  
[brucewalk@igc.org](mailto:brucewalk@igc.org)  
<http://www.radicalwalkingtours.org>

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